Nelle Y. McLaughlin
Marlinton, W. Va.

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

Chapter 5 - Section 1 - c

When the pioneer came to need more land than just patches, he would chop three or four acres smooth and a log rolling was in order. By invitation the neighbors for miles around would meet with their teams of horses or oxen, to assist in putting log heaps for burning. This being done, a feast was enjoyed and all returned home. The next thing was to burn the heaps. Outside the clearing a wide belt was raked inwardly to prevent the fire from getting away. The preferred time for using fire was at night when all would be still and calm. The first thing was to burn the clearing over, thus making away with smaller brush, undergrowth, and other trash. It was an impressive sight to witness as the smoke and flames arose like pillars, while the men, sweaty and sooty, passed among them keeping up the fires.

Another interesting pioneer social gathering was the raising of a dwelling or barn. No money was expected, just a return for like services when notified.

Huskings were popular at a certain period. In some communities they would come off in the day as a matter of business, not recreation or frolic. But the typical husking was prepared for with elaborate preparations. The ears would be pulled from the stalks, husks and all, and placed in ricks. This husking usually came off on some moon light night. A managing boss was chosen who arranged the men on opposite sides of the ricks, and the contest was who would be first to break over the crest line. Finding

a red ear was considered good luck and so every ear would be noticed as it was broken off. Whoever scored the most red ears was the champion of the husking bee. While the fathers and sons were enjoying themselves in this way, the mothers and daughters were gathered at the house, some cooking, others busy at the quilting. About ten or eleven o'clock the husking and the quilting were suspended, supper served and then came the hoe down, while stumbling toes would be tripped to the notes of a screeching violin. Such fiddling was called choking the goose or when there was no fiddle in evidence, someone only " patted Juba" about as distinctly as the trotting of a horse over a bridge.

As a rule the pioneer gatherings were orderly, yet on once in a while there would be a few persons at the husking who prided themselves in being and doing ugly. Somewhere about the premises there was someone or something they would speak of as "Black Betty". After a few secret visits to where Black Betty was, the consequences would be that colored Elizabeth with her songs, yellings, and a few fights would get in her work, and a fight or two would impart interest to the gathering, and make the occasion the talk of the neighborhood until some more exciting matter came up.

Material from: History of Po. Co. by Dr. Wm. T. Price

It was quite a task for the pioneer to clear the forest and build their homes with the poor equipment they had. They worked with a shop-made poll axe. In places the thickets of white thorn and wild crab were almost impenetrable. Bears and wolves were numerous and sheep had to be penned near the house to protect them.

Deer Creek received its name from the first settlers of the community and first appears in the records of June 7, 1780. Some of the old land patents record it as Deer Creek or Warwick. The deer were so numerous that they were a pest to the farmers who had to farm on a small scale only having small patches planted. The deer would sometimes destroy a whole crop. We have it by tradition that the pioneer Jacob Rumbaugh, whose home was on the land now owned by Monroe Beard, didn't have feed for his cow and fed her on deer meat one winter. It has since been conceded that a cow will eat dried venison. This probably happened at the old Rumbaugh sugar camp on the north fork where Jacob Rumbaugh had taken out a tomahawk right for twenty acres of land on conjunction with a man by the name of Covelough, who located on land now owned by James Cassell.

It was almost impossible for the pioneers to keep any stock and in order to do so, they had to be constantly on the watch. The Indians would steal the horses of the pioneers, kill their cows, and rifle the houses, taking or destroying anything they could get their hands on.

Nelle Y. McLaughlin,
Marlinton, W. Va.
Pocahontas

March 5, 1940

Chapter 4-- Section 3

The cooking in pioneer times was done in the old fire places. The were very large and very often took up one whole side of the room. There was usually an iron rod across the top of the fireplace and on this were iron hooks on which kettles were hung. Some of these fireplaces had iron cranes which would swing out from the fire and on which the pots were hung and then were swung back over the fire. These fireplaces were built of stone although the chimneys were seldom of stone the first summer, or year. While the pioneer was clearing his land, he would collect the stone with which to rebuild the chimney. Baking was done in front of the fire or in the coals. The ash cake was made of corn meal and the dough was shaped with the hands, then wrapped in cabbage leaves. The fire was brushed back and the cake baked in the coals. When cabbage leaves were not available, the cake was baked in the coals and the outside of the cake would be cut off and the inside of the ash cake eaten. Sometimes the dough would be flattened out on a board and set up in front of the fire to bake. There was a certain type iron skillet or pot brought in by most of the pioneers and one of these was found in nearly every home. A great deal of the meat was roasted over the open fire. The odor caused from cooking the meat in this way was probably the reason why many of the homes had the kitchens built separate from the houses.

As for salt, which was an essential and which could not be had here, the pioneer usually carried a supply when he first came. When this supply had been used, he would

Feb. 5, 1940

Marlinton, W. Va.

Pocahontas

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The home the pioneer built the first summer before the family was moved, was a very crude and rough affair. It was built with an axe and an augur and there were no nails to be used in its construction. The clearing afforded the number of logs necessary for its construction. It usually consisted of one room, sometimes two. The walls were of logs and the open spaces were filled with clay obtained by removing the rich upper soil and taking the second layer of the earth. The roof was made of clapboards held in place by straight poles weighed down by heavy stones. Whenever nails or spikes were necessary, the augur was used and wooden pins.

The chimney of these homes was never of stone the first summer. The stones would be collected along with the clearing of the land and the stone chimney would be built later. The first chimney was made of short lengths of wood built up and thoroughly daubed with mud on the inside. The floors were made of puncheons, though many preferred the earth itself for a floor. There were no windows. The door was made of split logs hewed into puncheons. It is said that the settlers became very expert with the axe and could hew timber so true that floors and doors could be made with joints as well fitted as if the boards had been sawed and planed. The sidewalls were full of portholes for defense against the Indians.

Richard Hill , for whom Hillsboro was named, came to the Little Levels from North Carolina right after the Revolution.

He built his house, which was very elaborate for pioneer times on a good farm in the neighborhood of Lobelia. He married Nancy McNeel, daughter of the pioneer John McNeel. His house was built of hewed logs, and the space between was filled with wood, mortar or mud, and then whitewashed. It had three porches, two tall chimneys and eight rooms. Simon Girty, the renegade, told that the Indians were so impressed with the fine display of the home of Mr. Hill that they called him the white man's king.

The furnishings of these pioneer homes were very simple and rough and homemade. Frequently big slabs were used for tables and three legged stools for chairs. Piffs in the wall were used for wardrobes.

Our pioneers were a strong, fearless race. After the early settlers had crossed the mountains and settled in this county, there was a striking increase of weight and height accomplished in a single generation. A man six feet tall was of ordinary stature. This is accounted for by their outdoor life, regular habits and rough healthful foods.

The pioneer woman was almost physically perfect. They would undergo the perils of maternity and not lose a day from their work. They were fearless and equal to any emergency. This is well illustrated by the story of Martha McNeel, wife of John McNeel. She was left at home while her husband and every other able bodied man in the Little Levels went to the battle of Point Pleasant. During his absence a child was born to her and soon afterwards died. The mother prepared the coffin, dug the

grave and buried it unaided.

Mary Vance Warwick, while her husband was in the army of the Revolution, went from the stockade alone to her own home four miles away through the forest. She discovered a large Indian war party and was able to take the news to the fort and prevent its surprise.

Many of the pioneers crossed the mountain on foot and carried back such supplies as were absolutely necessary and could not be obtained at home. After the formation of this county, according to records at the Court House, a load of salt would be brought in and distributed among the settlers. But most of the supplies were carried in by pack horse. This became a great business in pioneer days and the horse owners were very angry when the wagons came and began to take away their trade.

Chapter 4- Section 3

Manufactured cloth was almost unattainable here at an early day and the settlers had to depend upon themselves for materials with which they could be comfortably clothed.

The dress of the pioneer men consisted of a fur cap, moccasins, pants and a fringed hunting shirt. The favorite material of a hunters or rangers suit was deer skin, as it was best prepared to stand the rough usage to which it was subjected, and many families from the oldest to the youngest were thus clad. A suit made of it would last a long time and the styles did not change then as now. Great skill was attained in making the deer skin soft and pliable as fine cloth. Nearly all the cloth worn in the families of the early settlers was made at home by the wives and daughters. A neat fitting deer skin or homespun dress and close fitting moccasins made a pretty costume.

The wool was sheared generally by the boys and girls, and carded spun, dyed and woven at home. The cutting out and the sewing were done on the family hearth; stout heavy jeans for the men and a lighter article of linsey for the women. Both had cotton warp. Each family knit their stockings and socks of yarn. Every female practiced the art. All wool blankets were made in quantities and of superior quality. The little spinning wheel produced the thread for sewing and weaving linen. Stout "tow-linen" was woven for shirts and quantities of toweling and sheeting were made also. There are many beautiful coverlets of intricate design made by the pioneer women, in the county that have been handed down through the generations.

Jan 17, 1940

Nelle Y. McLaughlin,
Second Ave.
Marlinton, W. Va.

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Pocahontas

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The early pioneers were essentially self-sustaining, but the climate was such that the killing frosts early and late made the working of land a precarious source of subsistence until a comparatively recent period in the history of our county. As late as 1810, the fact that corn would ripen at Marlin's Bottom enough to be fit for meal was nearly a year's wonder. Gardens for onions, cucumbers, parsnips, pumpkins and turnips; patches for buckwheat, corn, beans and potatoes, for many years comprised most of the pioneers farming enterprise in the way of supplementing their supply of game and fish. The implements used for cleaning and cultivating these gardens were of home manufacture and for the most part rather rudely constructed.

The people were very frequently molested when at work by the Indians. On this account the men would carry their guns with them and have them always within ready reach.

It was scarcely possible to keep a work horse because of the raiding Indians, so most of the labor of farming had to be done with hoes. When horses and oxen could be kept and used, plows were in demand. The first plows were made entirely of seasoned hardwood. An improvement was made by attaching an iron plate to the plowing beam. To smooth and pulverize the earth for planting, the place of the harrow was supplied by a crabapple tree or a black thorn bush, pressed down by heavy pieces of wood fastened on by hickory withes or strips of leatherbark. The first harrows that superseded the crab and blackthorn, had wooden

frames shaped like a big A, the teeth being made of seasoned hickory dr white oak.

The first scythes that were used to cut the meadows were hand-made by the neighborhood blacksmith, and were hammered out instead of whetted to put them in cutting order.

For handling hay or grain, forks were used made of bifurcated saplings of maple or dogwood, carefully peeled and well-seasoned.

When the pioneer came to need more land than mere patches, he would chop three or four acres of trees and then a log rolling was in order. By invitation the neighbors for miles would meet with their teams of horses or oxen and assist in putting up logheaps for burning. When this was done, a feast was enjoyed and all would return home.

It was an essential matter that about everything needed for use arounnd the home be home-made or at least made somewhere in the immediate neighborhood. The pioneer wives and daughters were exceedingly skillful with their hands. Nearly every household that made any pretense of thrift had a loom, spinning wheels, little and big, a flax breaker, sheep shears, wool cards, and everything needed to change wool and flax into clothing and blankets.

Sheep were raised on the farms and were easily sheared by the girls and boys. The wives and daughters would scour, card, spin, weave and knit the fleeces into clothing.

The flax was grown in the flax patch, usually a choice bit of ground. When ripe, the flax was pulled by hand, spread

in layers, there it lay upon the ground until dry. After the flax had gone through all the processes the finer fiber was spun into finer fabrics and the coarse fiber spun into coarse fabrics.

The growing of wheat in Pocahontas County in quantities sufficient for self-support was not thought of in early times. Ploughed in with the bull tongue or shovel plow, brushed over by a crab bush or thorn sapling, and in many instances laboriously dug in with a hoe, it was a precarious crop, owing to freezing out, blight or rust. The harvests were gathered with a sickle. The value of one bushel of wheat was equivalent to two bushels of corn and exchanges were made in that ratio.

At first the horse tramping out was the manner in which the wheat was threshed. Where the crops were comparatively large flailing was superseded by tramping out by horses freshly shod. In this the half grown boy was much in demand as he could ride one horse and lead another. Two or three pairs of horses would hull out forty or fifty bushels of grain a day. After tramping a while the horses would leave the floor and rest while the straw would be shaken up and turned over, and then the tramping would be resumed until the grain was all out.

In separating the wheat from the chaff the first method was to throw shovelfuls up when the wind was high to blow the chaff away, and then the wheat was cleaned by a coarse sieve, or which was shaken by hand, and the chaff would come to the top and be raked off in handfuls. This was improved on the "winnowing sheet", usually worked by two men, while a third would shake the wheat from a shallow basket. Finally the "winnowing sheet"

gave way to the windmill or wheat fan, when the farmers became so advanced in circumstances as to feel able to pay thirty or forty dollars for one.

The first threshing machine or "chaff-piler" as it was called, was introduced about 1839 by Wm. Gibson of Huntersville. It was operated by Jesse Whitmer and John Galford, late of Mill Point. It was a small affair, simply a threshing cylinder in a box, propelled by four horses. When in operation the wheat would fly high and low as if all in fun. An immense sheet was spread on the ground, and this was enclosed by a wall of strong tent about eight feet high, on three sides. A person with a rake removed the straw as it came out. He would have his face protected with heavy cloth, for the wheat grains would sting. After the "chaff piler" came the separator, at first propelled by horses and then later by steam.

When it came to be possible to raise corn fit to eat in the limits of our county, its preparation for the table was of the greatest importance. One of the earliest contrivances was a hominy block". This was made from a large block of some hard wood, hollowed out at one end by burning. The top was large but it narrowed down in a funnel shape and held a peck or more of grain. Pounding corn for a family of eight or ten persons was an all day business and half of the night on Saturdays. After pounding, the grain was run through a sieve made of perforated deer's skin. The fine grain was used for "johnny cake" and for bread while the coarse could either be repounded or cooked as it was for hominy.

Hillsboro
Pocahontas Co

LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE EARLY SETTLERS

The pioneers, who made their way into this unbroken forest to build homes, endured many hardships and were denied the comforts of life which the present generation enjoys. While it has only been one hundred and seventy five years since the first permanent settlers came, which is a very short period in the span of the life of a civilized nation, yet there were no hard roads with the hum of the automobile motor upon them; no aeroplanes overhead to gaze at; no electric current to furnish light, heat, refrigeration, cooking and other conveniences; no radios to give news, reports on flood conditions, calls for help in distress, foot ball reports, move by move, from the University of California to every home in the nation possessing one; no woolen mills or shoe factories to furnish clothing and shoes and all the other comforts we enjoy to-day. But on the other hand, to survive, all had to work. The first undertaking after a settler came was the building of a house to live in - the home. The house was built out of timbers felled in the forest and hewed down to a uniform thickness. There was the art among the men folk of that day of notching and shouldering the ends of the logs when the house was being constructed which was so perfectly done and the logs went into place in the building so neatly and straight that it would appear that the work had been done by machinery.

This is now a lost art among workman but there still remains in the county some of these old buildings with the logs lying in the same perfect shape in which they were placed more than one hundred years ago. Many of these houses have since been weatherboarded and ceiled inside and with the original chimneys and stone fire place preserved they make a most comfortable home.

The cracks between the logs were either daubed with mud or stuffed with moss and then covered with boards. Mud was preferable, as the moss in many instances made a happy ~~xxxxx~~ home for mice and rats. Between these logs there was also cut, in the early houses built, one or more port holes so that the settlers could defend themselves with a rifle from viscious and savage Indians. The house was roofed with clapboards made with a froe from straight grained red or white oak and held in place on the building by weight poles. No nails were used in putting on the roof as all nails at that time were made in black-smith shops east of the Alleghenies, and the demand so great that they were not obtainable west of the mountains. These clap-boards were about four feet long and care was always used to put them on the building in the light of the moon as the understanding was, whether true or not, that if they were placed on the building in the dark of the moon they would cup up at the end, whereas, if placed on the building in the light of the moon they would lie flat.

Bella F. Yeager

(This subject continued im a later installment)

In the year 1772 after the close of the French and Indian war emigration was fast pouring over the mountains. The cabins of the pioneer dotted the wilderness along the western declivities of the Alleghanies. The great object of those pioneers had ever been ever was to obtain land and where ever that object could be accomplished there arose the log cabin and there was the home of the pioneer.

The result of the last war had forever settled the title of Virginia to all that portion of country lying between the Blue Ridge and the Ohio river.

Virginia freely granted portions of it to any as all who would undertake to found a home in the then "far west"

From her eastern part; from Maryland and Pennsylvania came the Conquerors of the wilderness, either a single family or in companies of a dozen or more

In 1754 David Tygart and a man named Files brought their families across the mountains and located themselves — Tygart in the beautiful valley which still bears his name and Files near where Beverly now stands. The Files family fell victims to Savage cruelty the Tygarts escaped and returned

part of the mountains

In the year 1770 the foundation of "Virginias metropolis of the West" many pioneers came over among them Ward Joshua Baker David Shepherd, the McCulloch's Mitchells Van Meter's Miller's Kellers and many others.

The beginning of Virginia was also the beginning of West Va. many of the pioneers fell victims of savage atrocity The colonists who came to Jamestown were victims of the Indians.

Their rude cabins dotted the wilderness but their suffering heroism and bravery won for them names that can not perish Enough, however, of the most important will be gathered from the recollections and grotesque of the old pioneers as will serve to illustrate the spirit of the times and the trials and troubles of the early settlers.

Nella F. Yeager

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ALWAYS RETURN THIS REPORT WITH THE MANUSCRIPT WHEN CORRECTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE

WEST VIRGINIA WRITERS' UNIT
312 Smallridge Building
Charleston

EDITORIAL REPORT

Edited by Ray Montgomery Date March 3, 1941

Subject Chap.5, Early Life ,etc. Project Pocahontas County History

Writer Richard F. Dilworth Status Writer

Remarks: Acceptable. Treats the subject easily and completely, covering home, social gatherings, work of men and women, and development of way of living to 1910. There are few specific markings and those so minor they seem unworthy of listing as criticism.

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EARLY LIFE AND OCCUPATIONS

The men and women who crossed the mountains to find homes of their own in the wooded valleys of Pocahontas (county) sentenced themselves to an existence of great misery and hardship with which few of us today would think the reward commensurate. They obtained their homes, to be sure, but that initial achievement probably was the easiest part of the battle. Life during the first years in the new land was a relentless struggle against the constant threats of starvation, disease, and the counter attacks of resentful outraged savages.

The home was the center of all the pioneer's thoughts and activities. There were no trades nor industries that were not a part of the home life. The ambition of land-hungry men to see broad acres on every side precluded the development of community life and shut each household off into a world of its own. Within this self-imposed prison the frontiersman labored and dreamed of a day when he might ride proudly as one of the landed gentlemen of the new country.

The size and comfort of the pioneer home was limited not by the desires or needs of the family so much as by the skill and manpower available. The men frequently went out alone or in small parties to prospect for their farm sites. The cabins they built were the products of forest trees and their own strength and skill with the few tools which they brought with them. Logs were notched so that they fit together without any other fastening. To form a roof, clapboards about four feet long were split from red or white oak and laid across the rafters. Since nails were a luxury even in the eastern settlements the clapboard roof was held in place by the weight of long poles, lashed to the eaves. The superstitious were always careful to lay

the roof in the light of the moon since one laid in the dark of the moon was sure to be ruined by warping of the boards.

Windows presented a serious engineering problem. not only did they weaken the walls but they made the house less impregnable to Indian attack. Greased paper was the only glazing material available. Consequently many of the early cabins had no windows or were simply fitted with small loop holes between the logs. Moss and mud were used to caulk the chinks. However moss proved to be such a popular nesting place for mice and assorted vermin that its use was soon discontinued. The fireplace and chimney were frequently built of sticks heavily plastered with mud. Such a makeshift was usually replaced with stone after the family had become established.

Floors in the new homes were of clay or sand. Later the more progressive settlers installed rough puncheon floors. A novel arrangement was that in the Gibson cabin on Elk. A puncheon floor about 12 inches above the ground level covered all but the area surrounding the fire place. This eliminated a serious fire hazard and provided a bench on which members of the family could sit about the fire.

Such casual disregard of formal furnishings was general along the frontier. To bring furniture across the Alleghenies on pack horses was impractical if not impossible. Leather thongs stretched over a rough frame made a satisfactory bedstead. Those who had not brought feather ticks slept on straw or pine boughs. Other furniture was generally limited to home-made shelves and benches.

Cooking was done in cast iron pots in the fireplace during the seasons when outside fireplaces could not be used. This was but one of the countless duties of the pioneer housewife. Besides keeping the house, caring for the children, and helping with the farm work the wife and her older children had the task o

the wife and her older children had the task of providing clothing for the family. Cloth from the store was an almost unknown article. every girl on the frontier was of necessity acquainted with the use of the spinning wheel, the loom, and various other implements for converting wool and flax stalks into cloth.

A choice bit of ground on each farm was reserved as the flax patch. The ripened stalks of flax were pulled by hand and subjected to three or four weeks of drying and weathering in an open field. The raw material was then stored until the frost of approaching winter had freed all hands from more immediate tasks. By means of the breaker, the scutching knife and the hackle, the woody part of the stalks was crushed and combed from the linen fiber. The course "tow" was woven into work clothes, grain sacks, and other articles subject to heavy wear. The finer linen was reserved for better clothing and household linens. The entire process, from planting to completion of the garment, took place within the limits of the individual homestead.

The ash hopper to be found outside the door probably was West Virginia'a first chemical plant. The hopper This was constructed by placing boards in a split log to form a V-shaped trough which was lined with straw. Ashes from the fire were placed in the trough, and one of the children would be assigned the task of pouring a little water over the mass each day as the time for the annual soap making approached. In seeping to the bottom of the trough the water developed a strong solution of lye which, when boiled with the yearly hoarding of fat and grease, provided soft soap. Although mildness was not the outstanding virtue of this product, it served as a toilet soap as well as for laundering and all other cleaning purposes.

Mrs. Mildred Shinaberry, who died in 1936 at the age of 93, loved

to tell of the washday trials of the early Pocahontas housewife. Clothes were originally washed at the nearest creek and pounded clean on a flat rock. As the settlements grew and skilled coopers moved in many families allowed themselves the luxury of wooden tubs. During Mrs. Shinaberry's youth some inventive genius originated a wash board which was simply a smooth plank in which horizontal grooves were cut. However, Mrs. Shinaberry and many of her neighbors scorned this threat to the honesty of their labors and continued to use their hard-worked knuckles. The daughters of the family soon obtained one of these home-made miracles, and, in 1900, Lucy, the youngest, became the owner of one of the first factory-made boards in the neighborhood.

The difficulties attached to laundering and bathing together with the absence of knowledge of sanitation made such practices much more infrequent than we would now consider essential. Besides, in the minds of many such extreme cleanliness was not only a waste of time but was quite dangerous as well. Older residents of the Greenbrier Valley knew quite well that anyone foolish enough to bathe his body or his head during the cold months from October until April deserved the inevitably fatal results of such an undertaking.

Though bacteria and other germs were yet to be recognized, the ills of the human body held an important place in the minds of our first settlers. Disease and injury frequently meant a major calamity in the remote communities with no doctor this side of the eastern settlements. The beams of almost every cabin were hung with numerous herbs having real or imagined healing powers. There was hardly a man who had not performed some crude surgical operation at some time upon either his family or his live stock. "Yarb" doctors and midwives were numerous. Mrs. Diana Saunders of Dry Branch is still remembered as one of the

colorful member

colorful members of this group. In his History of Pocahontas County Dr. Wm. T. Price relates a typical anecdote of Granny Saunders. He tells that when he was about six weeks old he suffered such a severe attack of whooping cough that he was actually believed dead. Granny Saunders came to the Price home, dashed the apparently lifeless body into a tub of warm water and pierced his body between the shoulders with a razor. She inserted a goose quill into the chest cavity through this opening and blew through the quill until the infant was once more breathing for himself. Granny Saunders, "Aunt Teenie" Moore of Knapps Creek, and countless other pioneer women of the county did much to relieve the suffering of their neighbors. Thomas Bradshaw, son of the pioneer of Huntersville, and John McNeil of Dry Creek administered aid in the form of hot baths, bleeding, and practiced pharmacy according to the dictates of the so-called "botanical school". Also in this group was David Hannah of the Old Field branch of Elk, who is thought to be the first of these forest-wise practitioners to live in lower Pocahontas. No matter how dubiously their methods are regarded today, these people played an important role in the development of the Greenbrier country.

Forerunner of the doctors of medicine was Dr. Tacy who lived near Greenbank in 1830. Dr. Tacy had a favorite tale of service in Napoleon's army which rivals that of Granny Saunders. His most intricate piece of surgery, he claimed, was performed upon a French soldier who had been shot through the stomach with a heavy ball. Observing that he must act quickly to save the man, Dr. Tacy ordered a sheep and proceeded to substitute the sheep's stomach for that of the soldier. The story continues that the operation was a complete success save that the patient entertained an overwhelming appetite for grass and other green forage for the rest of his days.

first graduate in medicine to locate in Pocahontas was Dr. George B. Moffett who came to Huntersville in 1843. Dr. Matt Wallace began practice at Mill Point in 1858, Dr. John Ligon settled at Clover Lick, and Dr. S. P. Patterson arrived in Huntersville at the close of the ~~Civil War~~ War between the States.

To survive in the early days of the county meant that every member of the family must work hard, days upon end without rest, at the numerous tasks about the farm. Technical skill and scientific methods were not in the vocabulary. Physical strength, disregard for bodily discomforts, and an agile brain trained by experience were the attributes of the successful pioneer. The weak died, for there was little pampering to prolong their lives. The importance placed on physical excellence is reflected in the prominence of such young men as Lewis Collins, Andrew Edmiston, and Thomas Johnson. These men were the heroes of their day not because of brilliant achievements in some science or art but because they could hit harder, shoot straighter, or carry a heavier weight than their neighbors. Edmiston cherished his reputation so much that when Johnson challenged his title as a champion fighter he could not rest until he had walked 15 miles to Johnson's home, knocked out the ambitious contender, and walked home again with a ~~trick~~ sprained shoulder that bothered him the rest of his life.

Through the worn law of survival of the fittest this physical stamina extended to the women and children as well. Children were considered the "Lord's will". Though there is, no doubt, considerable truth in the belief that large families were wanted to do the farm work, it is more probable that this fatalistic acceptance is largely responsible for the unbelievable size of many families of the early nineteenth Century. For every woman who lived to the advanced ages acclaimed by his-

torians, there were dozens of women who died at an early age from overwork and continuous childbearing. Families of less than five or six children were considered quite small. Clark McCloud was the father of 21 children, and Timothy McCarty trailed this record with 20. Each of these men was married twice. Largest family of one couple on record was that of Clark and Phebe Mann of Indian Draft who had 17 children, 16 of whom lived to adulthood. William and Nancy Wilson Wanless were the parents of nine daughters and seven sons; Samuel and Ann McGuire Waugh, early residents of The Hills, had nine sons and five daughters; Jacob and Mary Brown Waugh had 15 children of whom five lived to adulthood. Diphtheria, dysentery and countless other diseases took their toll, often wiping out entire families.

The children were but miniatures of their parents in their activities. The boys helped clear the fields and tend the crops while their sisters learned to cook, spin, sew and care for the younger children. Play was an avocation instead of the primary activity. Children learned to meet emergencies. The home of William McCollam of Stone Creek caught fire one Sunday while the adults were attending church. John, the eldest son, was about eight years old; Lawrence, the youngest, was two. John herded the younger children to safety only to discover that Lawrence was still asleep in the burning house. He dashed back and retrieved the baby from a mass of flame which left both of the scarred for the rest of their lives.

Prior to the time of the War between the States the children had little education other than the small amount which they received at home. Among a goodly portion of the people there was a distrust of too much formal education. Those who sat about and read rather than busying themselves with some manual task were rightly considered out of step with the era.

The first schools were supported by the more ambitious and well-to-do families. School was held in one of the homes or in an abandoned cabin or shed. The teacher boarded around among the scholars, receiving little remuneration in addition to their room and board. The education of the teacher was frequently of the most informal nature. Many were persons who simply had access to a library and read until they felt that they had mastered the elementary subjects. William Baxter of Edray, born in 1808, was the son of Col. John Baxter, owner of the largest library in the vicinity. The younger Baxter studied the contents of the hundred or more volumes on the three R's, religion, and allied subjects and ventured forth to become one of the most popular of the early pedagogues.

Reading material was limited in variety as well as quantity. The Bible, a few elementary text books and some religious works constituted the average collection. The Presbyterian and Methodist circuit riders brought in a large part of this material. The will of John Young, dated in 1843, lists a representative example of the libraries of the period:

"To my son John Young, the 1st. and 3rd. volumns of Clark's Commentary, also 1st. and 3rd. vols. of Wesley's Sermons. To my daughter Jane Cochran, Woods Dictionary in two volumns, Simpsons Plea for Religion, and Fletcher's Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense. To my daughter Sarah Ann Young, 2nd. volumn of Clark's Commentary. To my daughter Martha Adkison, the 4th. vol. of Clarks Commentary. To my son Andrew Young, the remaining part of all of my printed books either now in my possession or loaned out to my neighbors."

William R. Moore appears to have been a scholar of his day. A bill of sale drafted in his name in 1865 includes: "Key to Ray's Arithmetic, Grammar, McGuffeys Third Reader, Rays Algebra, Natural Phillosaphy, Conquests of the Bible, Medical Chemistry, Speller and Definer, Davies Surveying, Mitchals

Davies Surveying, Mitchels Geography, Phillosaphy and History, Walkers Dictionary, Tradesmans Companion, Mechanics Companion, One lot of books and pamphlets."

More important than formal education was practical experience in farming and household arts. The young folk of Pocahontas married at an early age in the pioneering days. Financial status was of little consequence. Establishment of a new home cost little but labor and hardihood in the face of adversity, traits in which the pioneer youth had been conditioned since childhood.

Announcement of a wedding was the signal for a wholesale turn-out of the entire neighborhood. The struggling frontiersmen and their families eagerly grasped such opportunities to break away from their ceaseless labor and join in the exciting festivities. The wedding day was more like a festival day at the county fair. Women talked and cooked and talked while the young men exhibited their prowess in weight lifting, wrestling and general rowdyism. Those possessing horses often indulged in a wild steeple chase-treasure hunt in which a hydrocarbonous lady known as "Black Betsy" awaited the riders at the end of the trail.

Hoarded linens and fine linsey dresses and shirts were the order of the day. In the evening young and old joined in the jigs and square dances. The local fiddlers dusted off "The Forked Deer," "Tug Boat," "The Lost Girl," "Sourwood Mountain," "Washington's March," "Cluck Old Hen," "Turkey in the Straw," and so many of the other old tunes that even the most tireless of the young bloods would finally stagger from the floor in a bedraggled state of exhaustion. Meanwhile the new and old songs were echoing from the moonlit hillsides: "Oh, Susanna," "Barbara Allen," "Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt," and "Old Dan Tucker" maintained long-run popularity records, which make the Hit Parade record-breakers

seem like passing whispers on the wind.

The setting up in housekeeping of the new couple was likewise a community affair. The groom's neighbors joined him in building a cabin and barns far more comfortable and substantial than the first settlers had been able to piece together through months of unaided, back-breaking struggle. His only obligation was a return of like service upon call. In like manner the now famous husking bees, quilting parties, and harvest armies grew, combining the efficiency of coordinated labor with social gratification of people scattered among the lonely mountains.

Life in Pocahontas remained a constant fight against the wilderness even after the loose-knit communities became fairly well established. Summer was quite often a short-lived visitor in the high, cool valleys. Within the memory of people still living it was a rare and gala occasion when corn ripened before the advance frosts of winter settled upon it. Lack of adequate farm implements left the farmer little more advanced than the Indians in his ~~farming~~ methods. Fields were cleared by cutting out the trees and brush by hand. After the dead brush and wood had been dragged into heaps and the surrounding area raked clean, a log burning would be announced. The burning was usually done at night after the evening breeze had ~~quieted~~ died down. The waiting period was consumed in spelling bees, story telling, singing, tumbling exhibitions, or, if the crowd convened early enough to have sufficient light, one of the countless shooting matches.

At last the men would light their torches and dart among the brush piles, sending orange flames darting through the heaps. While the sooty and perspiring men guarded against flying embers their families continued the festivities by the light of the crackling fires. ~~To be sure~~ there were always a few maidens who formed a giggling audience for the capering,

younger firemen. It was at such gatherings that the young folk traded secret glances, exhibited their skill and prowess in a very, very unconscious manner, and held hands and made the plans which would soon occasion other gatherings afford opportunities for other young couples to repeat the cycle.

Once the farmer's land was cleared his struggle was only begun. Cultivating the ground with a plowshare of firehardened wood was a tortuous ordeal. Even after use of the steel shovel plow became general, the task of turning the rocky, stump-clogged fields into usable farm land was enough to discourage any but the most stolid, relentless pioneer. Seed was sown by hand. Here, of course, the children were of use, and they worked long hours in the fields beside their parents.

Harvesting was done with a crude, straight-handled scythe. To cut the grain it was necessary for the harvester to work in a stooped position and gave him the appearance of a near-sighted old man searching the ground for a lost coin. Jeremiah Friel, son of Daniel O'Friel who came from Ireland in 1740, was one of the champion reapers of the lower Pocahontas region. As the harvest season approached he and his four sons were always among the early arrivals at Squire Robert Gay's, whose wheat was usually first to ripen. When all had arrived the whole party would race, whooping and singing, into the fields. A dozen handfuls, ten stood on end and covered by the remaining two, made a sheaf. He who could leave the most sheaves in his wake was a man to be honored and respected.

From Gay's the harvesters would progress up the river, clearing each stand as they went, until James Bridger's was reached. From there they continued to the farms of William and John Sharp, then to Josiah Brown's and on until they finished Robert Moore's fields at Edray.

emergencies were not infrequent. One evening at Friel's the harvesters were overcome by evening before the could get all the cut grain into sheaves. The crew adjourned to the house, leaving the remaining wheat to be put up in the morning. Just as the men were retiring, weary and full of a harvest supper, Friel was alarmed to see the ominous flashing of a thunderstorm crowding in over the mountains. He immediately roused his neighbors, thrust pine torches in their hands, and the whole party rushed back into the field. Amid the flare of torches and the growling thunder of the approaching storm they labored until midnight saw the crop safe from the torrent that broke across the fields hardly an hour later.

The first, small crops of the early farms were all threshed by the use of a flail. It was tedious work, and 15 bushels was considered an excellent day's production. As the size of the crops was increased the threshing was done by freshly shod horses. The grain was spread on a heavy platform, and a small boy mounted on one horse would lead another in tramping out the wheat. In this manner two or three teams could thresh 40 to 50 bushels a day. The wheat was then tossed into the the air with a shovel, and the lighter chaff would blow away. The remainder was then shaken through a course seive; the chaff coming to the top was raked off by hand. This slow method gave way to the winnowing sheet which was tossed by two men while a third shook the grain into the sheet. The winnowing sheet continued in use until the development of the wheat fan. In 1839 William Gibson of Huntersville introduced the first crude threshing machine known as a "Chaff piler". This machine, operated by Jesse Whitmer and John Galford, was to the Pocahontas residents one of the first wonders of the world. Powered by four horses its threshing cylinder could spin out more grain than a herd of horses could have tramped out by the old method.

The inability of corn to mature in the short seasons had become a disheartening problem. Many a crop produced little but fodder. John Johnson, a pioneer of West Marlinton whose cabin stood just below the bridge site, heard that corn had matured in Nicholas County and secured a quantity of the seed. The tale of his adventures on this trip ~~xxxxxxxx~~ is typical of many that occurred in the trackless forests of the countries infancy. Upon his return he told of having becoming lost on Black Mountain and wandering about for nine days unable to find anything to eat.save a small garter snake which he had been unable to force himself to swallow. Near the point of collapse he finally came upon a cabin where he gasped out his story to the woman who admitted him. She was upon the verge of serving him a hearty meal when her husband entered and averted her mistaken generosity. He fed the starved Johnson on small quantities of mush and milk until the wanderer became sufficiently recovered to retain more solid foods. After several days of convalescence Johnson was able to continue his journey. The seed which he brought with him produced one of Marlinton's first crops.

Most of the corn was eaten in the form of jonney (journey) cakes and hominy. Before the establishment of the water powered mills most of the corn was ground in hominy blocks which were nothing more than large mortars made from a section of tree trunk standing about waist high. The corn was placed in the burned-out hollow of the block and crushed with a heavy plunger. The finer meal was separated and used in baking the cakes, the courser grains either were pounded again or used as it was for hominy.

Had the early resident of the county relied solely upon agriculture for his livelihood he would have starved within a few months. Hunting and trapping became as much a part of the farmer's routine as was the tending of his fields. A wide spread practice was that of getting up

several hours before dawn and going into the woods with a rifle. The hunter was able to surprise deer and other game while it was still bedded down or just beginning to feed. Many hunters were able to bag tremendous amounts of game without being away from home over night or losing many of the precious daylight hours from his farm work.

John E. Adkison used to tell many stories of more extended hunting expeditions. He related that on such trips the hunters seldom expected to see much game the first day out. However, after they had accustomed their senses to the woods they were able to stalk and kill game with such skill that they soon had as much as the could carry home.

When John Barlow bought the property known as the "Brock place" he paid for it in venison at the rate of one half dollar per saddle or pair. He estimated that he had killed 1500 deer during his hunting career. His most fruitful hunting day was one in which he killed six deer and wounded the seventh. The trade in meat and furs was almost the only way that farmers along the Greenbrier could obtain the goods which they could not produce on their own land. The traders at Huntersville and Staunton enjoyed a tremendous business in which hardly any cash was ever seen. Cured meat and furs bought dress goods, hardware, kitchen utensils, lead, gun powder, and countless other commodities which could not easily be manufactured along the frontier.

The herb, ginseng, likewise proved a boon to those who longed for some of the things that could make their frontier life much more comfortable. "Seng" was worth from 30 cents to 40 cents a pound when dried. It grew in comparative profusion throughout a large portion of the county. Numerous are the legendary seng patches where a man could dig himself a small fortune in a few weeks. Apparently there is one somewhere between the headwaters of Greenbrier and the Shavers Fork of Cheat which was discovered by.

cheat which was discovered by a Union scouting party during the Civil War. The nephews of one of these soldiers, Jim and Sol Workman of Marlinton, set out to find this wondrous place where the stalks grew as thick as weeds over an area of two or three acres. Their uncle had described the patch as being on the boundary of an old, blazed line survey. Outside of Durbin they discovered such a boundary line and followed it for several days taking ginseng that they found along the way and camping on the trail. At the end of a week they came upon the place only to discover that someone had preceded them by only a few days. However their trip was not at all unprofitable since the seng they had collected along the route brought approximately $200 at the prices then current.

Ginseng had already won the respect of the Workman family long before Sol and Jim made their trip to the fabled patch. Their father, A. J. Workman, bought a farm of 175 acres on Rock Run and paid for it by hunting ginseng which was then selling at 75 cents a pound. He was typical of the early farmers who thus supplemented the production of their farms by capitalizing on the natural resources to be found in the woods. From ginseng, golden seal, and seneca snake root he derived a cash income. Furs of mink and raccoons were traded for salt, sugar, coffee and similar commodities. The first white sugar acquired in one such exchange proved a marvelous novelty to the Workman children, who had never known any but the brown product which was boiled from the maple sap every year.

A new source of revenue for the farmer-hunter opened after the Civil War when live stock farming gained new impetus. Sheep herders discovered that the county's abundance of large game animals was now a distinct liability. Flocks were frequently wiped out by bears and

wolves which lurked in the uncut timber surrounding a large part of the pasturage in the county. Bounties of $4.00 a head for bears and $15.00 a head for wolves were announced by Editor J. B. Canfield's Pocahontas Times on August 26, 1886. In that particular year 54 bears were proven for bounty - about the same number as have been killed in recent years in Pocahontas. A. M. V. Arbogast won top honors that year with a score of three bears and one wolf. W. H. Collins proved four bears, and James Gibson bagged three. James Sharp and C. C. Arbogast trailed the leaders with two bears each.

Bears were usually caught either by hunting with dogs or by the use of heavy steel traps or log snares. The few wolves killed in Pocahontas were killed by poisoned bait or were trapped in pyramid-shaped pens. These ingenious traps were baited with old or crippled sheep and left open at the top. The wolf could scramble up the inclined walls and leap upon the ill-fated bait, but when he was ready to leave he would discover that the opening was too high for him to reach.

Many thrilling tales have grown out of the struggles with sheep killing bears. Powerful Francis McCoy wrestled a seven foot bear through the laurel thickets and stone rubble of Black Mountain for several eternally long minutes before his hunting partner, the Reverend Asa Shinn McNeill, could safely bring his gun to point on the tumbling monster. Lame Paw and Old Hellion, largest outlaws killed in Pocahontas, terrorized stockmen for years before irate hunters finally brought them to bay.

As the tidal wave of the frontier rolled on to the West the character of Pocahontas life changed tremendously. The destitute pioneers who had risked their lives for the privilege of scraping out the barest existence in the new land were now settled, moderately prosperous farmers. Relieved of the constant threat of starvation they turned

to the problem of gratifying their desire for easier, more comfortable living. Richard Hill hired the Kennison brothers to build him a house which was the show place of the Little Levels. The Reverend John Waugh, a skillful blacksmith, found business booming as his neighbors became dissatisfied with their makeshift tools and flocked to buy his hoes and pitch forks and well-tempered axes. William Mayse was kept busy in his smithy at Mill Point. Nathan Burgess, gunsmith of the Little Levels, produced custom-made rifles, and his brother, John, a skilled carpenter, found new prosperity in his trade as people called upon him to build new houses and barns which a few years before would have been raised by their own hands.

Michael Daugherty, Peter Lightner, Daniel Kerr, and a score of others built their water powered mills along the Pocahontas streams, and the demand for well-ground meal and flour kept their burrs turning and doomed the hand mill and hominy block to a fast-receding past. Saws and powder mills were added to many of these establishments, and laboriously hewn timbers gave way to sawed lumber while powder became more easily available. William Civey of Anthony Creek developed one of several tan yards which gave the Pocahontas farmers good leather for shoes and harness. The Shraders also became famous for their leather.

Economic conditions in the county improved tremendously as land owners turned to stock raising. The limestone soil produced rich pasturage with a minimum of cultivation in contrast to the disheartening struggle of the early farmers to wrest decent crops from the rolling land. Cattle, sheep and horses of unexcelled quality carried the fame of the county to the surrounding states. Lee's famous mount, Traveler, was foaled in Pocahontas' own Little Levels. Large farms such as that of the Warwicks prospered on the new diversification. Slaves gave the region a new likeness to the parent settlements.

Huntersville merchants often realized more than 300 per cent on
ir goods in the booming retail trade which developed prior to the
r between the States,
il War. The strings of pack horses brought the latest goods and re-
ned to Staunton with the meat, hides, and other products of the new
tion. Unable to meet the growing trade they gave way grudgingly to
wagon trains which coursed the new roads. Travelers' Repose, in
northern part of the county became a famous stopping point for the
st-West travel.

The wagon trains developed a society all their own. Tough, wiry
n, the drivers thrived on the hard trips through mud and rain and burning
uh
st. If one bogged down, the next to come along worked and sweated and
their
ove his team to it utmost endurance to help the stranded freighter.
e ribald whooping, cursing and singing with which they broke the mono-
ny of the trips scandalized the quiet folk along the road. Hundreds of
en such as Fred Beard, John Gay, Paul Sharp and his sons Edgar and Ellis,
ill, Sam and Page Gay, Taylor Moore, Lloyd Reed, the Dilleys - Andrew,
ohn, Amos and Willie, Dave Moore, Mac Irvine, John Clarkson, John
rimes and Sam Freeman piloted the broad-tired, high-bowed freighters
hich were the heart of Pocahontas' traffic with the outside world.
ot until the twentieth century brought the railroads to the county's
oor did freighters give way to the rush of the machine era.

Pocahontas did not succumb to the industrialization that set in
in the later part of the nineteenth century. The St. [illegible]

Rich though it was in such natural resources the county entered the twentieth century still as a quiet, farming, stock-raising community. Cereal grains, garden truck, live stock and the traditional forest products remained the prime concern of the citizens. the creaking water mills continued to grind, and the husky, hill-bred horses withstood the challenge of the new horseless carriages. 1910 saw the industrial revolution barely touching the unhurried life of Pocahontas.

Chapter 5 - Section 1

Mr. James Gibson of Elk gave me the following information. Mr. Gibson is eighty-seven years old but his mind is very clear. He remembers quite well things that happened in his boyhood days.

James Gibson's father was William Gibson. The old log house where James Gibson can first remember living was built long before he was born. It was situated quite a way up the hollow from where he now lives. The floor of the old house was built about twelve inches off the ground and was over only half of the room. The earthen floor was used in front of the fireplace and the puncheon floor was used to sit on around the fireplace in the place of chairs.

William Gibson worked by contract. He fenced practically all of the Elk country. The land was all cleared by the older people. Mr. Gibson says that the younger generations have done very little, if anything, along this

then was piled in big piles and burned. This was the way the land was cleared in those days. Browse could be cut from all timber except ash and birch, the birch being too tough.

There were two mills on Stony Creek at that time to which they could take their corn to be ground. One was owned by a Mr. Duffield and the other by Taylor Moore. The one owned By Taylor Moore was located at the old McLaughlin spring just a quarter mile from where the fish hatchery is now located. This old mill was run by wooden water wheels. This mill was about ten miles from Mr. Gibson's home and when they went to mill, they got up and started early in the morning- about five o'clock- and did not get home until after dark. There was very little wheat flour, as the wheat did not ripen then as it does now here. The only time they ever had wheat bread was on Sunday morning for breakfast and that was quite an occasion. (Most of the older people that I have talked to have told me the same thing). The sacks that were used to bring the meal or the flour from the mill were very large and were made of flax tow. The sacks were very large and held about three bushels.

They used iron cooking utensils altogether. They had only two sugar kettles, but made enough, and more sugar and molasses to last them the yearsaround. At that time they could get no white sugar.

The pioneers had fine food and plenty of it. They had tree

molasses, plenty of butter and eggs, wild meats of all kinds, fish and fresh vegetables in summer and dried ones in winter. There was always plenty of honey, the Elk section of Pocahontas County has always been noted for its fine honey. Even long after the Civil War, large bunches from six to eight in every flock, could bee seen at any time - a bunch on every ridge. To kill a deer, they had only to walk out in front of the house. In those days a great deal of the venison was fried and sold. It was cut in slices and a stick was run through it, then it was hung before the fire until it had dried. Mr. Gibson has heard his father telling about taking wagon loads of venison hams to Lynchburg to sell and he received about eight cents per pound. The butter was put in sixty pound cans and sold for eight cents per pound. The cans were made on Elk by a man named Clark Ryder. He was a cooper and made cans, churns, barrels for sugar water and almost anything along that line needed by the farmers.

Mr. Gibson says that in those days neither laundrying nor bathing played a very important part in the lives of the people. The clothes were made of coarse, durable, homespun material. He can remember during the Civil War, that his mother would sit up all night spinning. The first " bought suit" James G Gibson ever had was when he was married. That suit was admired and supposed to be something very out of the ordinary.

In those days, so Mr. Gibson thinks, the people had much more real religion than they have now. He says that they practiced their religion then. Everybody was a neighbor to the other fellow. He can remember when he went to seventeen log rollings one spring. They had meetings then something like the revivals we now have. When they got to the "meeting house", all who belonged to the church stayed inside and all who did not belong to the church had to stay outside. These were called "class meetings". He said there were two ladies, Lizzie and Jane Hall, sisters of his mother, who could pat a tune with their feet while shouting, that would make the hair stand up on a man's head.

All of the dances were square dances in those days. The music was made on a fiddle and banjo. The crowds were well behaved. Most of the musical instruments were home made. There were no organs in that section in those days.

Ginseng in that section was very plentiful but the price was very low. It only brought about thirty or forty cents per pound when dried.

There was at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, a man living on Elk named John Jackson. He went to Huntersville to enlist in the Confederate army but was turned down because he was a "consumptive man". However, he ran off and got with the army somehow. He went through the war, came home, saw all of his comrades buried and died at the age of ninety-two

of the infirmities of old age. John Jackson cleared thousands of acres of land on Elk. It is told of him that when he came back from the Civil War, he had one finger shot off. He held his hand up and said, "Finger shot off - and it might have been my head. Fighting for a darned nigger, and I don't have a one on the place.

Mr. Gibson now lives in a large thirteen room house with all modern conveniences situated on the main highway over Elk. He has probably fed and sheltered more strangers, not mentioning friends and relatives, than anyone in the county. At the age of eighty-seven, he is a kindly, amiable old gentleman.